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Human resources management

Implementation of the mobility policy

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted in response for the request of the General Assembly in its resolution 61/244 for the Secretary-General to report on indicators, benchmarks, number of staff, timelines and criteria for the implementation of mobility policies, taking into account the needs of the Organization and ways to protect the rights of staff in the context of the system of administration of justice.

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I. Introduction

1. The 2005 World Summit Outcome (General Assembly resolution 60/1) reaffirmed the role of the Secretary-General as the chief administrative officer of the Organization, and requested him to make proposals to the Assembly on the conditions and measures necessary for him to carry out his managerial responsibilities effectively. The proposals of the Secretary-General were initially presented in his report entitled "Investing in the United Nations: for a stronger Organization worldwide" (A/60/692 and Corr.1). The details of the proposed new human resources framework were elaborated upon in the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Investing in people" (A/61/255 and Add.1 and Add.1/Corr.1), following consultations with managers, staff (including in the Staff Management Coordination Committee (SMCC)) and the United Nations funds and programmes and in the context of the inter-agency Human Resources Network.

2. One of the components of the new framework for human resources is the proposal of the Secretary-General for an integrated approach to mobility, envisaged as a way to improve the effectiveness of the Organization and to foster the skills and capacity of staff.

3. The proposals of the Secretary-General were reviewed by the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. In its resolution 61/244, the Assembly encouraged the Secretary-General to continue to make progress in the field of mobility. In recognition of the increased workload resulting from the managed mobility programme, the Assembly approved additional resources. Noting the current work on mobility policies, which includes the implementation of a managed reassignment programme, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on the issue at its sixty-second session (resolution 61/244, sect. IV, paras. 4 and 5). The present report is submitted in response to that request.

4. The Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to submit, at its sixty-third session, a report on the implementation of managed mobility with an assessment and analysis of the relevant issues, including the enforcement of post occupancy limits and financial implications.

II. Background

5. In the past 20 years, the Organization has experienced a dramatic expansion of operations, budgets and functions. In addition to its parliamentarian responsibilities, the Secretariat today directly manages complex, billion-dollar operations and delivers critical services around the world. In so doing, it works with a wide range of partners — including national Governments, regional organizations, civil society, philanthropic foundations and private sector companies — on a broad range of activities, from humanitarian activities, to peacekeeping, peacebuilding, human rights issues, the work of international tribunals, drugs and crime control and other activities that have a direct impact on the lives of hundreds and millions of people every day.

6. This new reality of the United Nations requires a workforce capable of fulfilling both the standing requirements of headquarters programmes and the mandates of field activities. The mobility of staff is essential in order to create such a workforce. Systematic mobility also helps the Organization to:

(a) Increase its flexibility and responsiveness, including the ability to meet rapid deployment requirements, by preparing staff to operate in a multidisciplinary environment;

(b) Improve programme delivery capacity, by addressing chronic vacancy challenges;

(c) Offer increased staff development and career advancement opportunities;

(d) Develop a more comprehensive understanding of, and therefore ability to address, the many facets of the Organization's work programme, through greater integration.

7. The need to increase staff mobility and to approach it in a more systematic manner has become an integral part of the Secretariat's human resources strategy since the early 1990s. In its resolution 49/222, the General Assembly noted that the human resources strategy of the Secretary-General called for mobility on the part of all new internationally recruited staff, and urged the Secretary-General to apply the mobility elements of the new strategy to internationally recruited staff. Later, in resolution 51/226, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to pursue "the development and implementation of the managed reassignment programmes for entry-level and other staff" (sect. III, part D, para. 6) and reiterated the importance of making substantive progress towards increased mobility (sect. III, part D, para. 7).

8. General Assembly resolution 53/221 emphasized "the requirement of mobility of all internationally recruited staff of the Organization as an integral part of their obligation", and requested the Secretary-General to "give full consideration to the need for greater mobility in the context of human resources planning, in accordance with staff regulation 1.2 (c)" (sect. III, para. 7). In the same resolution, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to "establish mechanisms towards, and to implement a policy of, enhanced mobility across functions, departments and duty stations" (sect. III, para. 8).

9. In response, the Secretary-General explained in his report A/55/253 and Corr.1 how he envisaged implementing his mobility policy, which included the introduction of time limits for post occupancy. The details of the policy were provided in annex III to that report. After the adoption of General Assembly resolution 55/258, the mobility policy was more fully developed and integrated into the new staff selection system, which came into effect on 1 May 2002 (see ST/SGB/2002/5 and ST/AI/2002/4). In subsequent resolutions on human resources management (resolutions 57/305, sect. II, paras. 47-53, and 59/266, sect. VIII), the Assembly expressed a number of requirements that should be observed in the implementation of the mobility policy. Those requirements have been incorporated into the policy currently in place.

10. An extensive consultative process has been conducted from the inception of the policy, through its formal introduction, to its current status. Mobility has been discussed in SMCC since 1999. SMCC agreed that mobility should be viewed in its broadest sense, with mobility requirements being fulfilled by movement among functions, departments, occupations, duty stations and organizations beyond the Secretariat. This statement has become the basis for the definition of mobility used by the Organization in its current policy.

11. Mobility continues to be discussed in staff-management consultations in SMCC. Most recently, it was agreed in SMCC in June 2007 that a working group comprising staff and management would be established to monitor the implementation of the mobility policy.

III. Mobility policy

12. The mobility policy was introduced as an integral part of the staff selection system (see ST/SGB/2002/5, ST/AI/2002/4, ST/AI/2005/8, ST/AI/2006/3 and ST/AI/2007/2) to support, inter alia, the development of a more versatile, multi-skilled and experienced international civil service and the promotion of greater integration among staff throughout the Secretariat.

13. The main principles guiding the policy are as follows:

(a) Mobility is not an end in itself, but a tool to enable the United Nations to fulfil its operational requirements more effectively;

(b) Mobility patterns vary depending on the requirements of the job and the location;

(c) Mobility is a shared responsibility between the Organization, managers and staff, in which all must play an active role;

(d) Mobility will be integral to career patterns: career progression will depend, in part, on evidence of mobility.

14. The mobility policy reflects the scope and nature of the work of the Organization, which significantly differ from the other international organizations included in the common system. The number of international Professional staff is large and the sizes of locations where they serve differ. There are at least 23 occupational groups, not all of which are replicated in all duty stations. Some of the Professional staff are highly specialized and based only in certain locations. These factors make the administration of mobility complex and substantially different from the situation prevailing in the United Nations funds and programmes and make straightforward rotation unfeasible.

15. Mobility is therefore defined in its broadest sense. It includes movement within and between departments, functions, occupational groups, duty stations and organizations of the United Nations system. A movement to a different position can be at the same level, which is considered to be a lateral move, or to a higher level. The new position may be in the same or a different department or office, in the same or a different duty station or in the same or a different occupational group.

16. The mobility policy was formally established in May 2002 when the limits on post occupancy (five years up to the P-5 level and six years above the P-5 level) were introduced. The post occupancy period starts anew each time the staff member moves as a result of selection under the staff selection system, within a managed reassignment programme, or as a lateral move to a post with different functions.

17. The policy links mobility to career development, requiring two lateral moves before promotion to the P-5 level. It also includes incentives to encourage movement to duty stations with high vacancy rates by permitting staff who have

served in Nairobi or in a regional commission other than the Economic Commission for Europe more rapid career progression.

18. Mobility for the staff at the P-2 level has been managed since 2000. Such staff are subject to a managed reassignment programme during the first five years of service in the Organization. The purpose of this programme is to provide junior Professional staff with enhanced orientation, training, mobility and career support during their first five years of service at the Professional level, in order to facilitate their adjustment and to accelerate the learning period leading to productive work and job satisfaction as international civil servants.

IV. Implementation of the mobility policy

19. During the five-year period since 2002, there have been systematic efforts to introduce the concept of mobility and create programmes and mechanisms to prepare and support staff. Achievements and activities in that respect have been reported in detail in the latest reports of the Secretary-General on human resources management reform (A/61/228 and Corr.1 and A/61/255 and Add.1 and Add.1/Corr.1).

20. The main aspects of these preparations include a communication strategy, expanded learning and training opportunities and greater focus on work-life issues.

A. Communication strategy

21. After the promulgation of administrative instruction ST/AI/2002/4, which institutionalized managed mobility and introduced post occupancy limits for all posts from the G-5 to D-2 level, a communication campaign was undertaken to familiarize staff globally with the new staff selection system.

22. In 2005, a global information campaign was launched to continue to build awareness among the staff at large of the mobility policy and inform staff of the support available to help them to prepare for mobility. Printed and electronic materials containing answers to frequently asked questions as well as suggestions on preparing for mobility were made widely available on i-Seek. In addition, a dedicated website was launched, and continues to be maintained, to provide staff with up-to-date information on mobility.

23. Additional information on mobility was also provided during the reform outreach in 2006, when reform teams visited 31 duty stations and met with some 5,000 staff members to provide an opportunity to discuss all aspects of reform, including mobility.

24. In 2007, targeted information-sharing campaigns were conducted for staff members who were reaching their post occupancy limits beginning in May 2007. This included both group and one-to-one meetings to ensure understanding of the programme and the support mechanisms available to staff and managers.

B. Training, learning and career support

25. In order to ensure that staff are prepared for mobility, a number of initiatives have been taken to support staff, including: (a) expanded staff development and career support programmes; (b) the establishment of career resource centres in all major duty stations; (c) a revised electronic performance appraisal system (e-PAS), which includes a career development goal, a learning goal and expression of interest in mission assignment; and (d) the issuance, online, of generic job profiles covering the majority of Professional and General Service posts (G-5 and higher), to clarify job expectations.

1. Expanded staff development and career support programmes

26. A new and enhanced staff development programme was launched Secretariat-wide, including special career development workshops, to provide staff with new skills and competencies, promote culture change and create awareness of the benefits of mobility. Some of the workshops offered are:

(a) The road ahead: navigating your career;

(b) Designing your own career road map;

(c) Preparing staff for career development and mobility: a workshop for managers;

(d) Career connections;

(e) Career plateaux;

(f) Job interviewing for applicants;

(g) Preparing written applications;

(h) Reputation management;

(i) Mobility readiness;

(j) Junior Professional orientation;

(k) Language and communication programmes.

2. Establishment of career resource centres in all major duty stations

27. The career resource centre, a component of the United Nations Secretariat career development system, is a resource for staff and managers offering career planning and development information, mobility support, learning opportunities and career counselling. It is a resource to ensure the continuous professional growth of both Professional and General Service staff members.

28. Over 5,200 staff members have used the career resource centre at United Nations Headquarters since its opening in September 2002 for workshops and individual consultations. By 2005, career resource centres had been established for staff at all offices away from headquarters and regional commissions. In 2006, over 1,500 staff members used the services of the centre in New York, while over 1,400 staff members used the centres in other duty stations.

29. The career resource centres offer staff members and managers opportunities to develop skills, knowledge and competencies required to promote career

development and meet the mobility requirements. Staff can utilize services including written, video and web-based materials and individual career counselling. The centres also provide workshops on topics such as career change, networking, preparing job applications (personal history profile), competency-based interviews and reputation management.

3. Electronic performance appraisal system

30. The e-PAS strengthens the link to career development by encouraging dialogue between staff members and supervisors on their career aspirations and competencies needed for future assignments. It also includes an opportunity for staff members to indicate their interest in going on a field mission.

4. Generic job profiles

31. Generic job profiles were developed in 2002 to streamline the classification process and to facilitate the first stage of the staffing process by reducing the amount of time spent in drafting and classifying unique job descriptions prior to the circulation of posts. The use of these profiles has contributed to greater standardization, efficiency, speed and transparency in creating vacancy announcements and clarifying job expectations. The generic job profiles are also continually reviewed to ensure that their content is current.

C. Work-life issues

32. One of the critical obstacles to mobility is the serious difficulty faced by dual-career families. The Organization has made efforts to examine and address work and life issues. Links have been established with associations that provide assistance in this respect. The United Nations has also participated in an inter-agency project sponsored by the United Nations Development Group to establish expatriate spouse-support networks at field duty stations. In addition, the General Assembly, in its resolution 61/244, invited host countries to review, as appropriate, their policies for granting work permits for spouses of United Nations staff.

33. The Organization continues to address work-life issues that impede mobility and are a barrier to achieving gender parity, in particular concerns affecting staff with family responsibilities, including by:

(a) Making every effort, when determining the timing of a geographical reassignment, to minimize the disruption of work in the duty station involved and to facilitate linkages with leave and school calendar requirements and the needs of staff with children with special needs;

(b) Giving priority consideration to staff who have served in hardship or non-family duty stations for headquarters or family duty station postings. The preferences expressed by staff members serving in hardship duty stations (C to E classifications) would be given greater weight than those of other staff members when they apply to positions included in the mobility compendium;

(c) Expanding possibilities for dual-career couples, for example by providing career counselling and job search assistance; exploring telecommuting options for spouses; and giving priority consideration to spouses for consulting opportunities, where appropriate;

(d) Within the managed reassignment programme, the Office of Human Resources Management would, in cooperation with managers, give priority to relocation of spouses, subject to availability of suitable posts and satisfactory performance.

34. In recognition of the demands that mobility and relocations place on international Professional staff members and their families and the resulting disruption to personal lives, provisions have been put in place to take into account family and other special constraints, to the extent possible.

D. Maintaining institutional capacity

35. The mobility policy is being implemented in a gradual and phased manner in order to maintain continuity and quality of service and to preserve the institutional memory and capacity of the Organization. In order to ensure that increased mobility does not adversely affect institutional capacity, the Secretariat is actively supporting and developing knowledge management practices. Such practices are important not only in the context of the implementation of the mobility policy, but also because of anticipated high rates of retirement in the coming years.

36. Managers are responsible for putting in place systems that would support mobility, including introducing standard operating procedures to facilitate knowledge management and the preservation of institutional memory, and undertaking succession planning and cross-training to ensure that the institutional capacity to deliver is preserved.

37. Knowledge management initiatives have included rotating staff through different assignments to expand the knowledge base and broaden the shared institutional memory. Many departments have launched knowledge management initiatives, including cross-training staff and rotating them through different assignments in order to spread the knowledge base and share institutional memory more widely.

E. Human resources information technology

38. In order to ensure the effective implementation of the mobility policy, in particular the managed reassignment programme, extensive preparations took place to enhance organizational information technology tools and to ensure accuracy of records. A dedicated website has been designed to provide staff with up-to-date information on the latest developments, including policies and procedures, timelines and learning opportunities. In addition, staff can address their queries to a specific e-mail address to get answers from the mobility team in the Office of Human Resources Management.

39. The current information technology system has posed numerous challenges, including the accuracy of the records, all of which have had to be verified. As a first step, staff who were identified to be reaching their post occupancy limit were requested to complete an electronic fact sheet. This gave an opportunity for staff to rectify any inaccuracies, or to provide missing information in their records. This information was reviewed in cooperation with responsible officials and adjustments were made as necessary. It is anticipated that with the introduction of the

forthcoming new talent management system some of these technological challenges will be overcome.

V. Managed reassignment programme

40. One element of the mobility policy is managed reassignment. Staff members who have reached the maximum post occupancy limit are subject to managed reassignment. The managed reassignment programmes are being implemented level by level, in a gradual and phased manner.

A. Criteria for implementation

41. The criteria for implementation of the managed reassignment programme are set out in ST/AI/2007/2, which applies to staff appointed at the levels G-5 to D-2 for one year or longer under the 100 series of the staff rules who will have reached the maximum post occupancy limit by the time the managed reassignment programme relating to their levels is launched. The managed reassignment programmes under ST/AI/2007/2 do not apply to the following staff members:

(a) Mission staff whose appointment is limited to a particular field mission;

(b) Staff whose appointment is limited to a particular office or programme, as these staff members are subject to a separate managed reassignment programme within the office or programme concerned;

(c) Language staff, defined as including interpreters, translators, précis-writers, editors, verbatim reporters, proofreaders, copy preparers, revisers, terminologists, text processors, language reference assistants and editorial assistants who were appointed after passing a competitive examination for posts requiring special language skills. They will also be subject to a special managed reassignment programme applying to language staff serving at the main duty stations and in the regional commissions;

(d) Staff members in the General Service and related categories who perform the functions of tour guide, language teacher, security and trades and crafts;

(e) Staff members within three years of retirement.

42. The administrative instruction also provides for exemptions for a staff member to participate in a specific exercise. Such exemptions are reviewed on a case-by-case basis and may be granted for a number of reasons, including valid medical grounds or when the technical requirement of the post or its degree of specialization cannot be met by other staff participating in the managed reassignment exercise.

B. Timelines for implementation

43. The managed reassignment programme for staff at the P-3 and G-7 levels commenced in May 2007. Programmes for staff at other levels will take place over the next 18 months in a gradual, phased manner, level by level. Subsequently, further managed reassignment programmes will be initiated, taking into account

lessons learned in the course of implementation. Remaining phases of the managed reassignment programmes are scheduled to start as follows:

(a) November 2007: staff members at the P-4 and G-6 levels;

(b) May 2008: staff members at the P-5 and G-5 levels;

(c) November 2008: staff members at the D-1 and D-2 levels.

44. This gradual approach should assist in embedding mobility in the organizational culture and provide sufficient flexibility to adjust the policy as necessary.

C. Indicators, benchmarks and numbers of staff

45. The mobility of staff is critical to creating a more versatile, multi-skilled and experienced staff, capable of fulfilling the complex mandates of the Organization. An essential aspect of this policy is the commitment to continuous learning and its link to career development. In order to be able to analyse the impact of the mobility policy in the future, to ensure that it is achieving its intended purpose, the current status will serve as baseline for future reviews.

46. In this context, a number of indicators and benchmarks have been identified to help the Organization assess the implementation of the mobility policy and to refine it, as part of a continuous process to seek to improve its practices. The indicators reflect staff mobility in general and include various types of movement, such as lateral moves, promotions and assignments. An additional indicator of staff movement will be that of staff moved though managed reassignment.

47. Mobility indicators from May 2002 until May 2007 reflect movement of staff prior to the expansion of the managed reassignment programme for staff other than at the P-2 level as shown below:

Mobility in 2002

Number of staff (December 2001)	**8 415**
Promotion	730
Reassignment within department/office	218
Transfer between departments/offices	90
Assignment other than a field mission	94
Assignment to a field mission	96
Inter-agency mobility	29

Mobility in 2006

Number of staff (December 2005)	**8 437**
Promotion	944
Reassignment within department/office	374
Transfer between departments/offices	277
Assignment other than a field mission	98
Assignment to a field mission	39
Inter-agency mobility	36

48. In May 2007, the first managed reassignment programme was initiated for staff at the P-3 and G-7 levels. The programmes for staff at other levels will be initiated in the course of 2007 and 2008. Therefore, in monitoring mobility indicators in the period 2007-2008, an indicator reflecting movements through the managed reassignment programme will be added.

49. The baseline data from 2002 to 2006, as well as in 2007-2008, will be used to evaluate the overall organizational performance, as well as that of individual departments and duty stations, in meeting the objectives of the mobility policy. In this context, the following areas will be benchmarked:

(a) Overall movement of staff in individual departments/offices;

(b) Overall movement of staff within a duty station;

(c) Movement of staff across duty stations;

(d) Inter-agency movement;

(e) Vacancies in duty stations with high vacancy rates;

(f) Participation in training and learning programmes.

D. Monitoring and protective measures

50. The managed reassignment programmes are implemented as flexibly as possible to take into account both the operational need of the Organization and the aspirations and personal or family circumstances of staff members. In order to ensure that the mobility policy is achieving its intended purpose, the policy will be monitored closely by the Office of Human Resources Management, with input sought from substantive departments as well as the staff. The policy will be reviewed at the end of the transitional period, in 2008.

51. Recognizing the necessity to ensure consistency in application of the criteria, taking into account the needs of the Organization and protection of the rights of staff, the managed reassignment programmes are centrally coordinated for all international staff. Programmes for staff in the General Service and related categories are implemented at respective duty stations, under the guidance of and with oversight by the Office of Human Resources Management. All requests for exemptions are reviewed and decided on by the Office.

52. Furthermore, as agreed in SMCC in June 2007, a working group comprising staff and management has been established to monitor the implementation of the mobility policy. In addition, staff members can avail themselves of the informal and formal mechanisms of the system of administration of justice should they consider administrative decisions to be incorrect.

VI. Conclusion

53. The overall aim of mobility is to contribute to the development of a versatile and multi-skilled workforce and to stimulate learning and development of skills. In this context, the mobility policy encourages staff movement, including by applying for posts under the staff selection system, through the managed reassignment programmes, in the context of opportunities for mission detail and other temporary assignments and for service with organizations of the common system.

54. This approach to mobility represents a significant change for staff and managers as, until now, staff movements were for the most part not systematically encouraged or centrally coordinated. It is recognized that, as with any organizational change in a large, complex environment, this new approach may give rise to concerns. These concerns will continue to be addressed through communication, training and counselling on a one-to-one basis when necessary. At the same time, it should be noted that many staff welcome the expanded opportunities that the mobility policy provides.

55. The Organization will refine the policies in the light of experience. The coming year will be an opportunity to assess and analyse how the policy is working and whether there are elements or aspects that need to be adjusted in order to meet the intended goals better. In this process, the Organization will continue to consult with all stakeholders, including staff, managers and Member States.

56. **The Secretary-General invites the General Assembly to take note of the present report.**